



## SUCCESS STORY

# Material World New York

**African Pavilion creates sales for Southern African firms**



Photo: Southern Africa Trade Hub

Over 4,000 buyers and 236 exhibitors attended the 2 day event held at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City.

**USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub, in coordination with the Trade Hub in both West and East Africa, supported the participation of African apparel manufactures at the 2006 Material World show in New York. A first time African Pavilion at this industry leading event represented an opportunity for producers from across sub-Saharan Africa to showcase the diverse products available on the continent.**

U.S. Agency for International Development  
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Material World New York, taking place September 26-28, 2006 at the Jacob Javits Convention Center, drew apparel, home furnishings, and accessories representatives from 475 companies worldwide. International participation exceeded previous numbers, expanding from 40 exhibitors in 2005 to 236 in 2006. Over 4,000 buyers attended, representing more than 35 countries including Bangladesh, China, Korea, Thailand, Morocco, India, Pakistan, Japan, and Taiwan.

More than ten African countries featured their apparel products in the Africa Pavilion, organized by Trade Links, LLC. Dedicating an exhibition area exclusively to the African companies had the effect of marketing Africa as a collective destination for buyers. The exhibitors each retained their national, cultural, and corporate identities. The pavilion showcased product samples and descriptions of facilities and services in Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Kenya, Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal, Swaziland, Madagascar, and South Africa, among others.

The USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub sponsored five companies to attend Material World New York. The companies capitalized. Through a contact made on the exhibition floor, Lesotho's Hippo Knitting will supply a 2007 order valued at \$1.9 million to a New York retailer, a move that will expand the Maseru company's production capacity by ten percent and require the hiring of 160 new employees. Label Clothing, out of Botswana, will supply an order valued at \$519,000 to Butta's "Made in Africa," earning its first foray into the U.S. consumer market. Both companies are in follow-up communication with additional buyers. Inter-regional networking also bore results: Label Clothing is negotiating with a South African firm to coordinate on standing orders for South African hospital scrubs and prison uniforms.

Material World is an ideal and invaluable venue for African companies. The ability to showcase quality samples contradicts the negative stigma of too-expensive, low quality African manufactures. The opportunity to interact with buyers in person helped to lower communication barriers, and the relationships forged surmounted another negative perception: that sub-Saharan African infrastructure is unsuitable to the fast-paced international market.